

*The Reasonableness and Necessity of Unity, and
the Evil and Danger of Schism.*

1508/1383.

IN A

S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D at

St. Mary's Church in the S A V O Y,

On Sunday the Eleventh of J U N E, 1710.

By G E O R G E E R S K I N E, Presbyter of
the Church of England.

St. Cyprian, Epist. 46.

Gravat enim me atque contristat cum vos illic comperissem contra Ecclesiasticam dispositionem, contra Evangelicam legem, contra institutionis Catholicae unitatem, alium Episcopum consensisse fieri, id est quod nefas est nec licet fieri, Ecclesiam aliam constitutis, Christi Membra discerpi, Dominici gregis animum et unum corpus descissa emulatione lacerari.

L O N D O N :

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The Privileges of the Ringers.

P R E F A C E

TO THE
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want in this stage I hope you will receive it at the earliest opportunity.

R E A D E R:

THERE are Two things usually expected from Men who Publish Discourses of this kind; First, That they should shew the Reasons of their exposing them to the Publick; and Secondly, That they may remove what Prejudices may be Offensive to the Readers, into whose Hands they may come.

As for the First; Although the abounding of Schism in the Nation, and its Damning Nature, may be a sufficient Reason for the Ministers of the Gospel, both by Preaching and Writing, to endeavour to save the Souls of all Men from such Evils as tend to their Eternal Damnation, by being careful, if in their Power, to reclaim those who are seduc'd, and to prevent others from being brought into a Snare by the bad Example of their Neighbours; yet I must confess, that considering both my years, and the appearance in the World I lately have made in this manner, I wou'd have suspended at least my making this Second appearance, had not the noise of this Discourse

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been spread Abroad to my Prejudice ; and that with so much Confidence, that some have misrepresented me, on account of this Sermon, to Persons of the Greatest Quality in the Kingdom : Which coming to my Ears, and being Conscious to my self, of Preaching nothing contrary to the Primitive Institutions and Doctrines of that Church of which I have the Honour to be a Pastor ; I thought the Publishing the Discourse it self, the most proper Vindication I could make, since by this means my own Sentiments may be most apparent.

As to the Second, Some may be apt to Censure my Sermon as too Uncharitable, in that upon the account of Schism, I may be judg'd to Condemn some good People, both at Home and Abroad ; but truly, they who talk at this rate, whatever they may pretend, seem to know nothing of Charity, which is far from consisting in flattering People in their Sins, and thereby becoming the fatal Instruments of their Destruction ; since although things, however bad in themselves, when general or habitual, become the less regarded by Men, yet the example of a Million, is no more to excuse any Crime in the sight of God, than that of One individual, it being our duty to govern our Actions by Precept and not by Example. And although in cases of great and evident necessity, there may some things be pleaded to extenuate any Transgression of this kind, or to render the Persons brought to such straits, the objects of the Pity, Prayers, and Compassion of their fellow Creatures, which how far God may of his infinite Mercy regard in singular Cases, is what I have no where in this Sermon pretended to determine ; yet I can see no Reason they, of whom I speak, can have upon this account to plead for themselves, since no conclusion, drawn from extraordinary Cases of Necessity, can justify the willful contempt of any Order God hath appointed ; much less will it justify the declaring the Hierarchy and Worship of our Church Antiscriptural and Antichristian, and enring into

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into Bonds, and Covenants to extirpate and ruin it as the dregs of Popish Superstition, which hath been, and is now, the case in Britain and Ireland; to inform and instruct our Country

Others may think I am finding fault with the Toleration, whereby Dissenters are screen'd from the Penal Laws; but I have no such meaning, for all I pretend is to declare against Schism as a Damnable Sin, and to prove that the Dissenters are guilty of it, and thereby to invite them to Repentance by returning to the Church. It is none of my business to meddle with the State, nor do I find fault with the Lenity of it; I only wish it may have those good effects, no doubt, our Rulers design'd by it; and therefore as the State, may for Reasons known to its Governors, for which they can be called by no Subject to an account, tolerate different Professions in matters of Religion; so I think no such Toleration can excuse the Persons Tolerated from the guilt of Schism, when justly charged upon them by Arguments purely Ecclesiastick, as in my Judgment, is the case of our Dissenters in England, from what I have here advanced.

But as in the Discourse, there may be some things spoken with a seeming bitterness, so, in that case, I shall only beg the Reader to consider the Reasons with which those things are back'd; and all I shall add further in my own Vindication, is, a Citation of St. Cyprian, relating to the same Subject, with which, I desire the Reader may compare what he may think too hotly express'd in the Sermon, De. Unit. Ecle. p. 116. Doth he think he is with Christ, who acts against his Priests? and who separates himself from the Society of his Clergy and People? He carries Arms against the Church; Fights against the Order of God; hath an opposite Altar; is a Rebel against the Sacrifice of Christ: He's, as to Faith, Perfidious; as to Religion, Sacrilegious; a Disobedient Servant; an Impious Son; and a Brother that is an Enemy; who having despised the Bishops, and left the Priest

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Priests of God, desires to Constitute another Altar, to make another Prayer with an unhallow'd Voice, and to Profane the true Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ by his false Sacrifice. *And to the same purpose in the Place cited in the Title Page :* Saith he, It griev'd me and made me sad, when I found you in that Place, i. e. Rome, against the Ecclesiastick Order, against the Evangelical Law, and in opposition to the Catholick Institution ; That I perceiv'd you had Establish'd another Bishop, which was, what was neither Lawful, nor ought to have been done ; That being to constitute another Church, to disperse or scatter the Members of Christ, and to rend asunder the Soul and one Body of the Flock of God, by your Factious emulations. *And if these Citerations, be not as severe as any thing I have express'd in the Sermon, I leave to any to judge ; and since I think they are, I shall submit to the Reader, how far a Clergy-man of the Church of England is Consurable, for making the Scriptures, and so Reverend a Prelate as St. Cyprian and some of his Predecessors, the standard of the Doctrine which he Teacheth, or of his Actions in the sundry parts of his Ministry ; I being always resolv'd, God willing, to make those my Rule. And from them I pray God, the Reader or me, may never depart.*

And so am,

*John Erskine, S. Cyprian, a Clergy-man of the Church of England, and a Member of the Assembly of Divines, in the year 1662, to the Reader, Sincere Well-wisher,
Geo. Erskine.*



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Ephesians Chapter IV, Verse 23

Appendix Chapter IV. Verse 3.

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the

endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of Peace.

HE Great Apostle St. Paul, having in the former

THE Great Apostle St. Paul, having in the former Chapters of this Epistle put the *Ephesians* in mind of the sundry Spiritual Blessings, they, as Members of the Mystical Body of Christ, did receive, by virtue of what our Saviour had done and suffered on their account: And having from the Eighth verse of the Chapter immediately preceding my Text, told them of the Honour and Dignity God had conferred upon himself in particular, *in that unto him who was the least of all Saints, this grace was given, that he should Preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*; and then having acquainted them, of that freedom of access to the Throne of Grace they through their Redeemer did enjoy; he tells them, *That it was his daily Prayer for them, to be strengthened by the Spirit, in the inner man, and that Christ might dwell in their Hearts by Faith, that being rooted and grounded in Love, they might be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the height, depth, breadth and length, and to know the Love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.* And having concluded that 3d. Chapter with a Doxologie; From the beginning of the 4th. he acquaints them of the ways and means how they might come at that Blessed Estate, he thus desired in their behalf; for saith he, *I therefore the Prisoner of the Lord beseech you, that ye walk worthy the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness, and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love:* And then immediately he subjoyns the words of my Text, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit, *in the bond of peace.*

The Reason then of choosing these Words for my present Subject will be very plain, shall we consider how little the Exhortation is practis'd even by many who pretend most strictly to observe it, as shall afterwards more fully be made appear if God permit: And having some time ago briefly touch'd the Sin of Schism,

in this Place from another Text, I hope it needs not be thought rude or impertinent in me, somewhat to enlarge at present, upon what then I was oblig'd only to glance at, to prevent my encroaching too much on your Patience. But to proceed,

In the Text there are two things naturally falling under our Consideration ; *First*, An Injunction given to the *Ephesians*, for enabling them to walk worthy of their vocation, in these words, *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit* ; that is, That it should be their care, as now they were ingrafted into the Body of Christ, and consequently enlivened and quickned by his Spirit, to continue still united to him, as the Members of his Mystical Body, that so they might still receive these fresh Supplies from him, that were requisite for maintaining their Spiritual Life ; through their being so united to their Head Jesus Christ, as our Bodies are to our Spirits, by which each Member of them is actuated and enlivened. *Secondly*, We have the manner in which this unity is to be preserved, *viz. in or by the bond of Peace* ; that is, by the strict observance of all the Ordinances of the Gospel, by which those Blessings are convey'd unto our Souls ; but in a special manner, in partaking of the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ ; which may be reckoned the Bond of Peace, both as being that Ordinance, in which is represented the unspeakable Love of God, in sending his Son to die for us poor miserable Sinners, and in communicating to us, by his Spirit, the effects of his meritorious Passion, for our comfort in this World, and for our Eternal Salvation in the next ; and also because in this Ordinance we testify our Love one to another as being the Members of the same Body, united under Christ our Head, and consequently having a mutual concern one in another, for rendering each individual a partaker of the eternal feast of Comfort and Bliss in the other World, as they have been partakers of that by which it was represented in this. So that in my Judgment, the meaning of the words amount to this, That the *Ephesians* here are required by the Apostle, as they would walk worthy of their Vocation, that they should take care so to observe these Ordinances of the Gospel, Christ had appointed for Communicating his Grace to his People, according to their different Necessities, and for preserving them, united unto him as the Members of his Body, as by that means they might more and more receive the fresh Influences of the benefit of this their Spiritual Union with their Redeemer.



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The words being thus explain'd, I shall endeavour from them to treat of these following Heads.

First, To condescend on those things requisite to form a Right Constituted Church, or the Mystical Body of Christ.

Secondly, To shew in what the union of this Church or Mystical Body of Christ, when Constituted, doth consist.

Thirdly, To prove it an indispensable Duty for the Members of his Body to maintain this unity one with another.

Fourthly, I shall make some Improvement.

As to the First, It is requisite for forming a Right Constituted Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, as being a Society or Body Political, that each Member thereof be thoroughly acquainted with the Laws of that Society in which he is Incorporate, to acquaint him both with that Subjection he oweth to the Prince and Head of the Society, and of the manner in which he ought to behave himself to his fellow Subjects; and since Man by Sin is become so much subjeeted to his sensual Appetites, as rather to consider the present, than the future Happiness or Misery attending his Actions, it is therefore requisite, since the Rewards and Punishments contain'd in the Laws of this Society, are, tho' most certain, yet not commonly bestowed or inflicted upon the Person, at that instant in which the Good or Evil is committed; That each Member of this Spiritual Society should be from time to time put in mind of those things, least peradventure they should slip out of his Mind: And hence it is, that in order to remove what difficulties might ensue, from our being left Ignorant of the Will of God, it hath pleased the Almighty to deliver to us the Laws which he required us to observe, in manner contain'd in the Books of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; and for the keeping the more lively impressions of those Truths upon our Spirits, he hath appointed a Ministry in the Church in all Ages, that so by means of their Administration, the whole body might be quickened and enlivened by that Spirit, who hath promised to be with them to the end of the World. In like manner as are the Members of our Natural Body, by the means of those Vessels which convey the Blood through every part thereof: And therefore I do affirm,

That the BELIEF of the SCRIPTURES as the Word of God, and the BEING of a GLERGY for dispensing of the Word and Sacraments, are two fundamental things necessary in the Being of a Church ; as being that upon which all other things, allowed to be Fundamental in Religion, do necessarily depend : So that by shaking this fundamental Doctrine, the Superstructure must necessarily be Ruined.

That the Belief of the Scriptures is requisite, will be plain, if we consider them as the Laws which the Head of the Church hath prescrib'd to his Members, both for informing them of their Duty, and for acquainting them with those ways and means, by which the Members are to enjoy Communion with their Head ; and therefore certainly as long as these means of Communion are necessary, which must be while the Communion is such, the Scriptures must likewise be needful ; and since Jesus Christ, who is God, is this head of the Church, from whom are deriv'd those Vital Influences, and with whom it is in these Ordinances, its Members do Communicate, the manner and way how this is attain'd, must certainly be that of his appointment ; and that being contain'd in the Scriptures, their Divine Authority is perspicuous, and all I now speak to, I presume have no doubt of them ; nor that Communion with God is necessary and attainable by the Directions thereof, which is what at present I only intend.

The next thing necessary in a right Constituted Church, is a Ministry, for the very BEING whereof a mission from Jesus Christ is of absolute Necessity ; for sayeth the Apostle, *How shall they Preach unless they be sent ?* And in another Place, speaking of the Priests of the Law, which are yet inferiour to those of the Gospel, he tells us, *That no Man taketh this Office upon himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron*, this being evident in their Office as *Ambassadors for Christ*. And as by an Earthly Prince, it would be counted one of the most heinous Offences any Person could commit, for a Subject to Counterfeit the Commission of his Prince as Ambassador to a Foreign Court ; so certainly the God of Heaven must look upon it as an affront offered to him, for Men at their own hand to pretend to any such dignity, as to represent his Son in the World, without Authority from him so to do ; and if he look'd upon the Invasion of the Priesthood under the *Mosaical Dispensation*, which was but Typical of the Christian, as a Crime deserving an immediate exemplary Punishment, by a present and terrible kind of Death, *Numbers 16*. Is it to be supposed, that though

though he doth not immediately avenge himself of such People as usurp the Gospel Priesthood, that he will never take any account of such Practices ?

A Mission being thus necessary for the Ministry of the Gospel from Jesus Christ, it must be either immediately from our Saviour himself, or mediately, as being given by those who from him received the Power to confer it to others : As for the first, I judge the pretenders to it will find difficulty to instruct their Pretensions, without betaking themselves to the other ; since what-ever any Man may say of the inward call of the Spirit to the Ministry, it can only, if true, amount to an evidence of his own Conscience, and only concerns himself, but lays no obligation on others to believe him, while the other Call is wanting ; yea, I may adventure to say, That the very pretending to an immediate Call, on purpose to avoid the other, is only a Delusion ; since God having planted an Order in his Church, it is the Duty of all Men to submit unto it ; and that Person which sets up any new Thing in opposition thereto, is rather acted by the Devil than by any good Principle ; especially since the Doctrines, the high pretenders to this immediate Call do industriously Propagate under that pretence, are such, as we may clearly find them to proceed from the Bottomless Pit, of which kind are your Enthusiasts of several sorts.

As for the mediate Call, some are of the Opinion with the Independants, That it consists in nothing but a Call from the People, and that any Person, who, by a Congregation of People, is desired to Administer to them in Holy Things, and for that end is set apart by the imposition of their hands, is by that a Minister of the Gospel, and called by God, who hath inclined the People to make him their Choice for a Pastor. But truly for my part, I take the Apostle St. Paul, *Titus* 1. 5. to have been of a quite different Sentiment : When he having laid the foundation of a Church at *Crete*, by making Sundry Converts to Christianity in that place, he left *Titus* with them, to take care to provide them in Pastors, and ordain them in their several Cities ; which certainly, were the reasoning of those People good, had been a great Intrusion on the liberty of the People in that Place, which the Apostle would have been Cautious about, for fear of giving them just ground of offence, especially at a time, when the Divine Illuminations were more frequent, amongst both the Clergy and Laity, than in this present Age.

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Others again with the Presbyterians do think, the Officers of the Church, those only to whom the Power of leading out of Pastors is given, but they look upon all having the Power of Administrating the Word and Sacraments, to have an equal Power of Jurisdiction and of Ordination, and therefore they make Ordaining the Act of a Presbytery, according as they say, to St. Paul's words to *Timothy*, *1 Tim. c. 4. v. 14.* But truly to me it looks surprising, that these People should look upon St. Paul as a favourer of Parity, who of all the Apostles has had most occasion in his writings to shew he knew the Power of an Apostle, and wou'd maintain the Authority thiereunto belonging, as a Bishop in ordinary as well as extraordinary Cases, and had he believed the Doctrine of Parity, he must have known himself to be the most arrogant Usurper in the World; not only in putting *Titus* upon the usurping the Office belonging to a Presbytery in the forecited Place, but also in his Epistle to the *Corinthians*, where he tells them, That *he was now coming to them, and when he came he would not spare.* Had Parity prevail'd at that time, might not the Presbyters and People of *Corinth* disown his Authority, as being a Presbytery within themselves? Or if he had come, and been allow'd to sit with them in this Court, the most at this Rate he could have pretended to was one Vote, which would soon have been ballanced, and his judgment was nothing, being out-voted by the Reverend Assembly. To what purpose then did he tell them, he would not spare at his coming, when they knew how to keep him out of a Power of acting as he pleased? And as to the Text made use of in Ordinations, besides that the Words may admit of another reading more agreeable to the Original, by taking the

* His Inst. lib. 4. and his Commenta. on Tim. and Tit. word *πρεσβύτεριον* for the Office, and not an Assembly of Presbyters, as doth *Calvin* their famous Patron. * The Apostle St. Paul, *2 Tim. 1. 6* being present, who had an Episcopal Power, sheweth us plainly that this Ordination was not the act of Presbyters acting in Parity, as appears more fully by the different prepositions made use of in the Two different Places; for tho' in one place he had said *WITH the laying on the Hands of the Presbytery*, he says in the other, *BY the laying on of MY hands*, implying at least, That it was by his Authority he ordained him a Priest, tho' some Presbyters might have assisted in the same: And further, these Gentlemen, to evite *Timothy's* being Bishop, call him an *Evangelist*, to make him an *extraordinary Officer*. Now pray, if this is true, they could not be ordinary Presbyters

ters that Ordained him, else they had taken upon them to Communicate an higher trust than they ever receiv'd, an Evangelist being above an ordinary Presbyter, by their own Confession; and therefore I'm afraid such Ordinations will be found light when weig h'd in the Ballance of the Sanctuary.

Others again, disowning the Two former, do judge, That Jesus Christ hath appointed distinct Orders of Ministers in his Church; and to the Supream Pastor or Bishop, for distinguishing him from the Priests or Deacons, he hath committed a Supremacy of Jurisdiction, and the Authoritative Power of Ordination; and that none but those who were thus Call'd, and admitted to the Ministry, have a right to Minister in Sacred Things to the People; the other Clergy or Laity, without his Concurrence, having no Power to send Labourers into the Vineyard of Christ. And this Opinion seems to be supported from the Practice of our Saviour, who having left Eighty one behind him with the Power of Administration, gave the Power of Ordaining to the Eleven, when he Cloathed them with that Authority, which he had himself upon Earth, St. John the 20th. v. the 21st; by Virtue of which it was that the other Apostles ordained *Matthias*, and afterwards appointed the Seven Deacons; and this diversity of Orders of the Officers of the Church, we find again repeated by St. Paul, some Verses below my Text; He there tell us, that Christ gave some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints: Nor did those diversities of Orders, thus at first Instituted, come to an end with the Apostolical Age; but in the first Age after them, we find the Primitive *Ignatius*, plainly enjoyns the People to esteem and reverence the Deacons as the Ministers of God, the Presbyters as the Apostles of Christ, and their Bishop as Christ himself; because that without those there was no Church: Epist. to the Tral. and Smyr. And *Tertullian* speaking of the Power of Baptism, saith, *The High Priest, who is the Bishop, hath the Power of Administrating Baptism, and under him the Priests and Deacons, who can only Baptize by the Bishop's Authority, which is necessary for the honour of this Church, by retaining whereof Unity is preserv'd, else might the Power be in the Laity*; *Tertul. of Baptism, Chap. 17.* And this belief of the Presbyters and Deacons, as well as the People, having their dependence upon their Bishop in their Administration, was what prevail'd in the universal Church for above the first 1500 Years after Christ, which certainly shows

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us, That they who made the Clergy in their Administration, thus depending upon the high Priest, would never allow them to ordain others independently of, or in opposition to his Authority, as is now by some come to be practised ; who had they been living in the best and purest Ages of Christianity, had seen their Ordination made void, and themselves Anathematiz'd for such Sacrilegious Usurpations ; as was *Aerius* the first Famous Presbyterian.

The next thing I shall mention as requisite in a right Constituted Church is, the initiating of its Members by the Sacrament of Baptism, according to our Blessed Saviour's appointment, *Matt. 28: 19*. And the necessity of this will easily appear, if we consider, that all Persons without Baptism are still liable to the Guilt and Dawning Power of Original Sin, as continuing still to have the first *Adam* for their Representative, as in the Covenant of Works ; whereas by Baptism, the laver of Regeneration, they being ingrafted into the Body of Christ, have by that, in their own Persons, a Right to all the Blessings of the Covenant of Grace, which our Saviour hath purchas'd, in which state they do certainly remain till they fall from it by their own Actions ; and hence, tho' I will not affirm how far the Fæderal Right of Children to this Sacrament may stand them in stead, in Case of dying without the actual receiving that Ordinance, yet I may safely say, the state of those Children is much more secure who have their Fæderal right by Baptism, confirm'd in their own Persons, than is that of those that want it ; and this being the initiating Ordinance under the Gospel, as was Circumcision under the Law, without which God cannot be said to be in Covenant with us ; I cannot by my shallow Reasonings find out how any Man can be a Member of the Christian Church without Baptism, more than of the Jewish without Circumcision ; and as those who neglected this Circumcision were to be *cut off from their People*, so they who wilfully neglect or contemn this Sacrament of Baptism, may justly be affirm'd to be cut off from the Mystical Body of Christ, and consequently from any Covenanted Title to Salvation.

Having thus shewn you several things requisite in a Right Constituted Church, I come now to consider in what the Unity of the Church, thus constituted, doth consist ; which you have in these few Heads.

The Unity of the Church thus Constituted, doth consist, in the maintaining the same Faith by all its Members, and this certainly must be requisite, at least in all the essentials of Religion, else there could be no sort of unity whatsoever, whilst what one did affirm

affirm the other might absolutely deny, and consequently the true Members of the Mystical Body of Christ, should come to be united with the most Gross Hereticks, and those who endeavour'd what they cou'd to extirpate the Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles ; and therefore the Apostle tells us immediately after my Text, *That there is one Faith, which we have sum'd up in those Three Creeds approved by the Articles of the Church, namely the Apostolick, Nicene, and Athanasian.*

But further it is requisite for preserving of Unity in the Church, that the whole Members thereof should be United in one Hope ; and therefore the Apostle tells the *Ephesians* next Verse to my Text, *That they were call'd to one hope of their calling :* And truly should we narrowly consider this, we will find it most reasonable, since no Union whatsoever can be, where there are different ends, and designs in view, amongst the Persons concern'd and thus supposed to be United ; since if this take place immediately, the Union must be broken, while according to their different aims, each of them will seriously endeavour to pitch upon those means he thinks most ready to produce the end he aims at; as Two or Three Travellers bound for different Places, though they occasionally or accidentally meet in the High way, yet their designs being different, they in little time must leave one another ; and in like manner in the matter in hand, while some Men out of a Conscientious Principle of observing their Duty to God, and from the hopes of enjoying of him in Eternity if so doing, study to live as becometh Christians, and others out of a Principle of self-Interest, thereby hoping to become eminent in the World, pretend to be Religious, and to Joyn themselves to the other ; yet this Union, tho' it may continue for a time, is apt suddenly to be broaken, and must certainly come to nothing, while the Ambition of the latter is satisfied, or when it may happen that Religion is not so much esteem'd as to be capable to serve his design ; and no wonder it should be so, the bond of this Union being nothing but a Charitable Disposition in the one, and the height of Hypocrisy in the other ; whereas, were their hopes built on the same Principle of enjoying God in Eternity, their different states in the World would never alter them, but they should always remain united in prosecuting this their design.

Besides the professing the same Faith and Hope, it is requisite that the Members of the Church, if united one with another, should retain the same Charity and Love, both towards God and

their Neighbour; testifying the one by a careful endeavour to observe his Laws, and the other by studying to promote the Happiness and Felicity of one another in our Souls and Bodies, and by having such a concern one in another, as bath the Members of our Natural Bodies, beings always sensible of the flourishing or decaying estate of every one, and so affected with it, as to study to remove the one, and to encourage and promote the other with our utmost endeavours: And truly, if this be wanting amongst those who pretend to Christianity, as alasse it is too much, it is an evident sign that they who have it not, are strangers to this Unity of the Spirit, which according to their Vocation they ought to maintain, since the Apostle St. John hath plainly told us, *That none can love God whom he hath not seen, who loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen*; and as it woul'd not look natural to the Eye to be insensible of the Pains of the Head, or to the Stomach or the Hand, to be insensible of the Feet; so I can see no reason, why it should be thought that any Man can be a Member of the Body of Christ, without a fellow-feeling of the Joys and Miseries, of the other Members of the same Body.

The last and chief thing in which the Unity of the Church doth consist, is, that of external Communion, in using the same Worship, and partaking of the same Altar, as Members of the same Body, and thereby *eating the same spiritual bread, and drinking the same spiritual drink*, 1 Cor. 10. 3, 4. And that this Communicating in the external act of the Worship of God, especially in the Holy Sacrament, is that which can be but one, and that in which the unity of the Church consisteth, as composed of several Members, will be evident, from Scripture, from the constant belief of the Church, and from the Nature of the Sacrament it self. From Scripture, the same Apostle tell us, *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the blood of Christ? the Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ? for we being many are one Bread, and one Body; for we are all partakers of that one Bread*, 1 Cor. 10. 16, 17. Since then the Bread and Cup in Scripture, are taken for the Body and Blood of Christ, exhibited in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the Apostle Argues from their being partakers of one Bread, their being one Body, I cannot, for my part, find out any other Gloss to put upon the Words, than that he believed the Unity of the Mystical Body of Christ to consist in the partaking of the same Altar and Bread; and consequently Judged all those who did so, as incorporated into the Christian Society,

ty, and those that did not, as having no part nor portion therein.

The being of but one Salutary Communion is clear, from the constant Assent of the Church; for which purpose *Irenaeus*, the immediate Successor of the Apostles, having shew'd them the Necessity of the one Altar, in order to reap the benefit of Members of the Body of Christ, he tells them, alluding to that Sentence of the Apostle against immoral Practises, 1 Cor. 6. 9. *Be not deceived, for he that makes or jaysns with a Schism in the Church, he shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*; Epist. to the *Phyladelphians*. And so St. *Cyprian*, in the sundry Epistles to *Cornelius* against the *Novation Schism*, tells him once and again, That they had thrown themselves out of the Church, and consequently were void of any part in Christ. And particularly, Epist. 43. There, says he, is one God, one Christ, one Chair or Bishop, and to erect an other Altar or Priesthood, except the One Altar, and One Priesthood, is impossible. And certainly this Reasoning had been the most foolish in Nature, had they spoken so against opposite Communions, as to render the maintainers of them Schismatical, and consequently in a state of Damnation, and in the mean time not believ'd the partaking of the same Altar, a necessary part of the Communion of the Church. And so far were they from contradicting any thing of this, that they own'd their Bishops as the Principles of Unity in their several Districts, whom, as the Chief Ministers, and Representatives of Christ, the Head of the Church, they judg'd all People, both Clergy and Laity, oblig'd to Reverence and obey as their Head; looking on those who did otherwise as no Members of the Church, but accursed: As is evident in the former Citations, from which it is that St. *Cyprian*, Epist. 3. telling *Rogatian* how to deal with a Rebellious Deacon, by exerting against him his Episcopal Power, gives this for the reason of his advice; for, saith he, *this is the beginning of Hereticks, and the Rise and Study of Schismaticks, imagining Mischief, that they seek to please themselves, and contemn their Bishop through proud Insolence*. Nor for my part do I know any one contradicting those Principles, till the Sixteenth Century at soonest, *Aerens* only excepted, who on that account, was, as St. *Augustine* testifies, by the Church, declared an Heretick.

That it is essential to the unity of the Church, that its Members should partake of the same Altar, is further evident from the Nature of the Sacrament its self, which as it represents to us the Sufferings of Jesus Christ, and is a Seal of the Covenant Communicating to us its benefit, so also 'tis a Sign

and evidence of our Mutual Love and Unity one with another: And since, did any Man see Two Persons so prejudg'd against one another, as both to refuse Eating or Drinking in the other's Presence, or to keep Company and Converse; then certainly he could not judge those Two united nor intimate who acted in such manner; yea, he'd believe them quite discontent and dissatisfied one with another: So for those who refuse to partake of their Spiritual Food, together in the same place, but go to Assemblies directly contrary to one another, to be Spiritually united, is what I do not comprehend; since were they Members of the same Body, that which Nourish'd the one, could not be esteem'd Poisonous or Hurtful to the other.

Thus I have shewn you in what the Unity of the Church doth consist, Let me ever proceed, deduce these two Consequences from the whole: *First*, That those are justly Chargeable as the Breakers of this Unity, and erectors of Schism, who impose Sinful terms of Communion upon the People, in so far; as by that means they force others to rend themselves from their Church, and so make a Separation from their Religious Assemblies to be Necessary, under which Misfortune the Church of Rome hath fallen, by adding terms of Communion, and new Articles of Faith, contrary to the Doctrine of the Gospel, dishonourable to God and our Saviour, and destroying the design of the Sacraments, *by exalting the Pope's Supremacy, Praying to Saints, and their Doctrine of Transubstantiation, Purgatory, &c.* all which, having made a breaking off from her Communion of absolute Necessity, She, and not We, must be Charged with the Guilt of this, and all its dreadful Consequences, as being the first cause of them; there being none who offered to separate from her, till they were necessarily provok'd by her addition to the Doctrine of the Gospel; by which the Foundation was in hazard of being destroy'd.

2dly, That those who make a rent in the Church of God, by setting up of opposite Altars, where no sinful terms are imposed by that Church from which they separate; are, by doing so, in a state of Schism, and as having broken the Bond of Peace, and thereby cut themselves off from the unity of the Spirit, and from the one Body of Christ, they cannot be said to have any part or portion in the Head, while continuing in such a State: And this how far applicable to our Modern Schismatics in this Kingdom, I shall by and by consider. And this for the Second Head.

I come now to the Third Head, which is to prove it an indispensible Duty of the Members of this Mystical Body, to maintain this Unity one with another, and this will be plain if we consider,

God hath required this Unity to be observed by all without Exception, since he hath commanded *that we should love our Neighbour as our selves*; and certainly, what ever Men may say of their obeying this Command, yet the daily experience of all People in the World plainly evidence, That when Men begin to divide upon a Religious account, they do then fall from the due observance of that precept, while in the Place of that Love, the Sin of Schism is commonly accompany'd with Malice, against all that go not an equal length with themselves in the encouraging such Divisions; and therefore, since it produceth such effects contrary to this Command, it may suffice to be an Argument to Unity, by saying, it is required of us by him, who as the Sovereign Governour of the World, hath the Authority to require of us what he pleaseth, and we no power of calling his Law unto Question.

But to this add the Consideration of the Advantages we reap by the Observance of this Unity, while by this it is we become one with Christ and he with us, by this we are incorporated as Members of his Mystical Body, and have a right to the promises, on account of what for us he hath done and suffered, since the being his Members, puts us immediately under his Care and Protection, as having a tender Sympathy with our Infirmities. And pray my Brethren, to say as *David* in another Case, Doth it seem to you a small thing to be not only the Sons-in-law of an Earthly Prince, but the Adopted Sons of the King of Heaven, and made joyn't Heirs with Christ, by having an uncorruptible and durable Inheritance, *even an exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*.

And if we proceed from this, to consider the miserable estate of those engaged in Schism, we shall find good Reason to perswade us to the observance of this Unity of the Spirit recommended in my Text, and therefore consider.

Such as do engage themselves in the guilt of Schism, are miserable in regard of their shaking off the Badge, and Distinguishing mark of Christianity, which our Saviour left behind him to his Disciples, for saith he, *hereby shall all Men know you are my Disciples, if you love one another*; while in place of Love, Contention, must needs to such People, be their distinguishing mark, that they are his followers, or else their can be no

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Testimony given by them that they are such; and that this love one to another left in Charge by our Blessed Saviour, was to be testified by a mutual Communion, in the sundry acts of Worship in the Publick Assemblies, needs not to be called in question, since it is certainly not the least, but greatest Testimony of Love he calls for at our Hands; and none can be above or equal to that Love which ought to obtain betwixt the Members of this Body, they by that Relation having a mutual concern in the eternal happiness of one another: And in this fense certainly, the Apostle in my Text takes this Unity, as a walking worthy of our Vocation, from which the Schismatick having swerved, doth, by walking unworthy of the Vocation of a Christian, shake off the very badge of Christianity it self.

They who are guilty of Schism are miserable, in regard of their doing what in them lies to frustrate the design of the Gospel, which is, that when it brings the tidings of Peace and Reconciliation with God, it ought also to dispose us to Peace one towards another, which by Schism is intirely disappointed, when in place of this, it rather foments than asswages their Malice: And if this be too little, then we may easily concieve of them, as the greatest Enemies to the Propagating of the Gospel in the World, whatever pretended Sanctity or Zeal for Religion they may have; since by the rents they make, they both cast a stumbling-block before the weak, and also furnish the Enemies of Religion of all sorts, with pretences to ridicule and mock at all manner of fense of it, whilst they find so many different Animosities among the different contending Parties, which makes them conclude Religion but a Trick and Invention, which none can account for, and all pretend to maintain upon a Separate footing; and how often this is cast up by Men of all Ranks in common conversation, is truly matter of regret, and those who keep up division must answer for it some time or other, since by their means Men make our divisions a common objection against Christianity.

They who are guilty of Schism, do render the intercession of Jefus Christ in behalf of his Church to themselves of none effect, as having no part therein, having cut themselves off from being Members of his Mystical Body, and consequently from those vital influences they receiv'd by being united to him as their Head, as the Branches to the Vine; and upon consideration of the advantages his Members by this union should reap, it is, that he prayeth the Father in those words, *Holy Father, keep through thine*

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... in one name, these whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are,
 St. John 17. 11. The which Prayer cannot avail any continuing in Schism, who despise the unity prayed for, and therefore must be deprived of its Blessed effects ; they being among those in the World, for whom our Saviour said, *He Prayed not whilst in that Condition.*

And as they render useless the intercession of Jesus Christ to themselves, as Guilty of Schism, so in the same manner they thereby exclude themselves from any interest in his Meritorious Passion, and consequently from a Covenanted title to the Promises of Grace here, and Glory and Happiness hereafter ; and if dying under the guilt of it, must, for what I know, Perish Eternally. It is true, indeed, it were high Presumption in me to limit the Infinite Mercy of God, since no Man can account how far it may extend in particular Cases, such as that of the Heathens, and those of whom we speak, who are only so far differing, that the one dies in utter Ignorance, and the other in great measure in willful disobedience ; yet when we speak of a right to Salvation, that is, what can only belong to the Members of the Church of God, from which all Schismatics are, by their own Actions, Excommunicated, and differ from those cut off by Church Censure only in this, That the one is his one Executioner, while the other, by Church Governours, is formally expelled for his Faults.

The Schismatick is guilty of Crucifying to himself afresh the Son of God, and putting him to open shame, by setting himself up in opposition to the Ordinances of his appointment ; and since the humane Nature of Christ is now in Heaven, by which means it is impossible that he should suffer again upon Earth, therefore, unless his Suffering in the Members of his Mystical Body, be look'd upon to be the meaning of that Text, for my part I cannot comprehend it ; and if so, then certainly in this respect, the Schismatick doth dayly afresh Crucifie his Saviour, since having cut off himself from his Body, he makes it his busines daily, more and more to rend it asunder, if paradventure he may, at last tear it quite into pieces, which certainly must offend him who hath such a Sympathie with this Mystical Body, as that he hath declared, *That he that toucheth its Members, toucheth the Apple of his Eye.* And however this may be surprizing at first, yet if we consider the Current of the Apostles words, we may find them justly applicable to this Sin of Schism, *Let us hold fast, saith he, the Profession*

of our Faith without wavering, for he is faithful that has promised; and let us consider one another, to provoke to Love and good Works, not forsaking the assembling of our selves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching; and then he subjoyns as his Reason for this Exhortation, for if we sin wilfully, after we have receiv'd the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth henceforth no more sacrifices for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses's Law dyed without mercy at the mouth of two or three witnesses, of how much sorer a Punishment shall be be thought worthy, who hath troden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the spirit of grace, Heb. 10. from the 23d to the 30th; and speaking of the same subject, he calls it *a crucifying afresh the Son of God*, Chap. 6. 6. all which how applicable to the present matter of Schism, as rending his Church, and despising and undervaluing his Ordinances, and withdrawing from the Communion of the Saints, to me seems evident in it self.

Having thus then shewed you what is requisite in a right Constituted Church, namely the belief of all things contained in the Scriptures, the preserving a Ministry, having a lawful Call and Mission, and the initiating its Members by Baptism; and also that in which the Unity of that Church doth consist, viz. in the Members having one Faith, one Hope, one Charity, and one Communion. I have now shewed you the indispensable Obligations of the Members thus united, to maintain that Unity amongst themselves, from its being a Command of God; from the advantage by it the Members enjoyed; and from the evil Nature and Consequences of Schism; such as its being a throwing off the Badge of Christianity, its frustrating the designs of the Gospel, and being the great hindrance of its spreading and success in the World; its rending to those who are guilty of it, our Saviour's Intercession and Satisfaction of none effect, its depriving them of a Covenanted Title to what Jesus Christ has purchased, and its being a Crucifying afresh of the Son of God. I come now in the last place to make some improvement of the whole, and in that allow me separately to speak to our Occasional Conformists, our Rigid Dissenters, and those of our own Communion.

That there is a Schism at this instant prevailing in the Nation, in setting up of opposite Altars, and contrary Assemblies of Worship,

ship, is so plain and evident matter of fact, that no Man can deny it ; it must then be incumbent upon me, to enquire who are chargeable with this Sin, the establish'd Church, or those Dissenting from her ; and in this I hope it may be granted, that all separation from a Church regularly constituted, is unlawful, except in case of sinful terms of Communion, being imposed by the Governors of that Church upon its Members.

And therefore as to those who Conform with us, and Dissent from us occasionally, certain I am, with them there can be no point of Conscience in their separation from us, since if they look upon it sinful at one time, why not at another ? And if always they esteem our Communion to be a Sin, Pray why then do they stretch their Consciences as occasion offers, to joyn with us for a small Temporal advantage ? Can any Man under Heaven be so Blind as not to see, that whatever they may pretend, there can be no matter of Conscience in this ? or can the Almighty be so far deceiv'd, as not to perceive their being lead to this by Faction, and Contention, and Covetousness, rather than by Sincerity ; which prompts them thus to ridicule his Ordinances, and makes a mock at Sin ? Wherefore my Brethren, if any such now hear me, let me intreat 'em to consider what I have said of the evil of Schism, and that since their Hearts must needs Condemn them of causeless Separation, that God is greater than their Hearts, and, as knowing all things, will Condemn them likewise, unless they repent and amend.

And for those who pretend to Dissent from us out of Principle, I hope it will not be amiss to enquire upon what solid Foundation their Principles are placed, and here let us consider our Church, and we will find, that as being a Church, she owns the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, and all things therein contain'd, in opposition to the *Deists, Socinians, or the like* ; as to her Government, we shall find it truly Apostolical, and as for her Worship, Rites and Ceremonies, we shall find them both Primitive and Innocent ; in all which respects She can be said to impose nothing sinful upon her Children.

As for our Government, our Church, doth with the Primitive, believe the Different Orders of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, to be of Divine Authority ; and that the Bishop in his District is the principle of Unity, to whom all sorts of Persons ought to be Subject in matters Spiritual ; and as in his See he is the Representative of Jesus Christ, so by him it is that a Mission from Jesus Christ is

transferred to the other Orders of the Clergy, without which it could not be effected ; And this might be proved to have been the Judgment of the Church from the Apostles downward, from one Age to another, were it not too tedious, and already so substantially well perform'd by multitudes of Famous Divines. All I shall say further is, that I should be satisfied that our Dissenters should produce me one Society of Men professing Christianity, and acknowledg'd as a Christian Church, fram'd according to their Scheme of Government till the Sixteenth Century, when *Calvin* set it up at *Geneva* ; and the better to confirm my Assertion, it may deserve to be observed as an eminent Author has already done, That the most impious Hereticks, could never think their Party establish'd upon any certain Foundation, unless they got some Bishops on their side, so general was the Divine Right of those Officers believ'd by all ; and therefore this put them upon their utmost endeavours to furnish themselves with such, either by Seducing some already in that Office, or procuring their Favourites Consecrated in Sees probably already supply'd, which certainly they would not have done, had they thought that Governement so easy to be overturn'd ; yea, and so much were the first Founders of the Government of Parity, sensible of this, That Mr. *Calvin* pleads for it on account of its Necessity, and not for its Divine Authority, and expressly calls *a Dissenting from this Church, by reason of her Government or Ceremonies, a leaving of the Faith*, Epist. to the English at *Frankford*. And pray, what but Conviction cou'd make this Author, and several of his Cotemporaries, make such a Concession against their Interest, is what I cannot understand : And as for the Power of Ordination, as lodged in the Bishop, I can hardly find out one Instance, in which Presbyters did of themselves pretend to it, till the setting up this new model of Governement. It is true, in the See of *Alexandria*, in the time of *Athanasius*'s exile, some *Arrian* Presbyters had pretended to Ordain one *Ischyras* in a Country place, which when *Athanasius* visiting his Diocese understood, and finding him Sick, ordered the rest of the Presbyters to acquaint him, that it was his Bishop's orders, that he should no more Officiate as a Priest till he appeared before him ; but he being sensible of the Grounds for such Commands, instead of going to his Bishop, went to his *Arrian* Associates, accusing *Athanasius* of the greatest Villanies imaginable, upon which, in a pack'd Synod, the Bishop was Condemn'd ; but the matter coming afterward to be cognos'd by a Council, *Athanasius* was acquitted, and *Ischyras*, notwithstanding

standing the Ordination of the Presbyters, Excommunicated for Usurping the Priestly Office : *Socrates Eccl. Hist. Book 2. Chap. 19.* and 20. and this for what I know is the only instance of such things, the first Fifteen Centuries ; and how those People will Answer for their daily following such Courses, and thereby engaging themselves in the Trespass of *Korah*, or what kind of the now contended for Moderation, had they lived in those Ages, such People had met with as made this dayly Practise, is what I should gladly understand.

As for the Ceremonies and forms of Worship in our Church, practis'd by her Members, and enjoyned by her Canons, those have all been taken from the most Ancient Forms of the Church of God in the first Ages of Christianity, when Forms were practised, which are look'd upon by some of the best searchers into Antiquity, to have began immediately after Inspiration was ceased ; but to grant the most that can be alledged in this head, which is, that there are several things in our Forms in themselves indifferent, which are only binding by the Command of the Church ; those then who divide for such things, must needs be in a state of Schism : While in that case were they Lovers of Unity, they might reflect with themselves, that since 'tis impossible for a Church to be constituted so, as all Humours will in every respect be satisfied, and therefore since the breaking off from the Church, and dissolving the bond of Unity with it, is a matter of such Importance as ought not to be done but on some material accounts, those things not being in themselves essential but indifferent, are rather for Peace to be submitted unto, than to make a breach upon such Reasons ; and this certainly would look much more becoming Christianity were such People endued with that Spirit, it being more becoming for private Persons to Submit to their Governours in things indifferent, then to Resist them. But truly they seem rather to be endu'd with a wounding than a healing Temper, while they may be judg'd rather to be afraid of any Agreement, then to wish or desire it ; and therefore on purpose to make the Breach wider then it was, and more visible to the Vulgar, they have thrown out of their Assembly the most material marks or Badges of Christianity, in pretence of being more and more Reformed ; and on this pretence it is, that because they differ from us on account of using forms of Prayer of Human Composition, they have thrown out even that form which is Divine. Because once at least if not more in our Assemblies, a profession is made by all of us of the Christian Faith, by rehearsing of our Creed ; they reject

the making any such profession, least probably it should disoblige some Heretick or Infidel, who may favour their interest; and because we study to feed our Flocks with the sincere and unmixed Milk of the Word of God, by reading a Portion of each Testament to them, at each time they are assembled, they therefore will not suffer the Scriptures Publickly to be read, save only such a part of them as they pretend to interpret, least peradventure were the Word dispensed without their gloss and interpretation, the People might some time or other be made sensible of their mistake.

This being the true state of the Question betwixt our Church and her Dissenters, let any Man judge whether the Sin of Schism is to be laid on us or on them. To our Charge, because we hold fast that Government in the Church which Christ and his Apostles left in it, and because we pay that Respect to our Bishops in their Sees as the Representatives of Jesus Christ, and through their means derive our Mission from Christ the Chief Shepherd of the Flock, in the exercise whereof we impose nothing sinful nor contrary to the Word of God, and Practice of the Primitive Church founded by the Apostles. Or if it ought to be charged upon our Dissenters, who in pretence of shunning to comply with some things in our Worship, in the worst Sense but indifferent in themselves, and in no respect sinful, have erected themselves into a Body, and constitute separate Assemblies; and without any Immediate Power from God, or Warrant from those to whom our Saviour left that Authority, have assumed a Power at their own hand, to Constitute a Church and a Priesthood, in direct Rebellion to those God had set over them; and thereby, have involv'd themselves in the Guilt of the most Sacrilegious Usurpations, even in the Trespass of *Korah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*; and who consequently leave no condition to us to observe, for procuring the desired Unity, save our bringing our selves equally with them, under the damnable Guilt of Schism.

And now as to you my Brethren, that are the Members of our Communion, as what I have said, if rightly consider'd, may be sufficient to awaken those therein concern'd to consider their ways; so it may afford you comfort, as being Members of the Mystical Body of Christ, and having thereby a Covenanted Title to the Benefits he hath purchas'd, and a Ministry to dispence to you his Ordinances, whose Title so to do is indisputable, and consequently whose Administration on Earth,

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our Lord hath promised to ratifie in Heaven ; which is the misfortune of those, seperating from you, to be depriv'd of : Let me therefore entreat you to walk worthy of those Priviledges you enjoy, and to improve them the most to your own advantage, by walking Circumspectly both towards God and the World ; as you tender your own Salvation, and would not wilfully render all those Blessings, to which you are intitled as Members of the Church, useless and ineffectual ; as you would not bring a Reproach to the Society of which you are Members, by occasioning Men to Blaspheme or speak evil of it ; and as you tender the state of those poor miserable Souls, you see lead through Schism into the ways of Eternal Perdition, and would not give Men occasion of stumbling through the unfruitfulness of your Lives and Conversations, and thereby more and more harden them in their Sin, and become the Miserable occasion of their Eternal Damnation ; let me, I say, on all these considerations intreat you to walk worthy of your Vocation, by endeavouring, to continue to maintain *the unity of the spirit in the bond of Peace*, by testifying your Love to God, by a careful observance of his Commands ; and your Love to one another, by endeavouring, to the utmost of your Power, to promote the Salvation of your own Souls, and of the Souls of one another ; that continuing Members of the same Body, under the same Head Jesus Christ, and partakers of the same Spiritual Food ; you may all of you after this Life is ended, enter into the perfect enjoyment of God, there to partake, one with another, of that Blessed Estate enjoyed by the Church Triumphant, in the same Unity wherein you have partaken of that by which it was Represented, while in the Church Militant upon Earth.

Which God of his Mercy vouchsafe to give you, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Redeemer ; To whom, with the Father and Blessed Spirit, be all Praise, Honour, Power and Dominion, World without end.

But this is nothing; now tell me about the following day's work.



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